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L14: Entry 1 of 2   File: PGPB   Aug 29, 2002

DOCUMENT-IDENTIFIER: US 20020120527 A1
TITLE: Method and system for international shopping

Abstract Paragraph:
Presented is a system and method for determining a total cost of a foreign
originating product in a customer's local currency. The system allows a customer to
shop via electronic methods regardless of a merchant's location country and receive
the total final cost of the product in the customer's local currency. Currency
exchange, duties and tariffs, taxes and shipping are included in the given total
cost of the product. The system also includes a duty estimation system for
estimating duty charges prior to a product crossing an international border is
disclosed. The product is categorized according to product categories set by each
country. Based on the most frequent countries of origin of that particular product
category and duty charges for these countries, a weighted average duty rate is
determined and applied to the local currency value for duty cost of the product

Pre-Grant Publication (PGPub) Document Number:
20020120527

Summary of Invention Paragraph:
[0002] The present invention relates to the field of electronic commerce. More
specifically, the present invention relates to a system for assisting international
electronic commerce.

Summary of Invention Paragraph:
[0003] Purchasing products through electronic methods (i.e. electronic commerce) is
becoming increasingly more common as consumers realize the convenience of shopping
at multiple electronic stores 24 hours a day from a single physical location.
Electronic commerce has enlarged the modern marketplace where importing products
was already common. Purchasing products from foreign countries should no longer be
significantly different from purchasing domestic products due to the ease with
which electronic commerce methods cross international borders. The difference
between purchasing foreign and domestic products is often the accuracy with which
the final cost of a product is given by a merchant.

Summary of Invention Paragraph:
[0004] Currency exchange rates vary during a business day. Credit card companies do
not vary their exchange rates with currency ratios but rather change their exchange
rates only periodically. Further, the exchange rate used by the credit card company
is not necessarily exactly the value of the local dollar as a premium is often
added for commercial exchange rates.

Summary of Invention Paragraph:
[0005] While there are a few electronic commerce merchants that try to serve
foreign customers, their methods are limited to only a few foreign countries. For
example, Vision Direction (www.vision-direct.com) offers mirror electronic commerce
websites for Canadians, Americans and British, offering their products in either
Canadian dollars, American dollars or British Pounds. However, very few merchants
offer this service due to the extra effort required to offer products in a variety
of currencies and the complexities and cost of offering mirrored systems.

Summary of Invention Paragraph:
[0006] The electronic commerce systems that do offer products in a number of
different currencies do not calculate any duty or tariff charges that may be
incurred as a result of the product crossing international borders. Duty and tariff
charges are determined only as the product crosses the borders, before which time
these charges are not known by the customer. As a result, duty and tariffs are
frequently charged on delivery and must be paid before a customer can receive the
purchased product. This causes uncertainty in the total cost of the product at the
time of purchase and complicates trans-border shopping as customers must anticipate
paying duty and tariffs when the product arrives.

Summary of Invention Paragraph:
[0008] In accordance with one aspect of the present invention there is provided an
international shopping system in communication with an electronic commerce system
operating in a first currency and offering a product for purchase, the
international shopping system providing a cost in a second currency for the product
to be imported into a destination country, the international shopping system
comprising: an input/output interface for receiving a request for the cost of the
product in the second currency and providing the cost of the product in the second
currency in response to the request; a commerce system interface to the electronic
commerce system for obtaining information about the product in response to the
request; a product cost calculation system comprising: quote processor for
establishing the cost in the second currency for the product to be imported; and an
importing cost determination module in communication with the quote processor for
determining an import cost for the product to be imported into the destination
country based on information about the product obtained from the electronic
commerce system, the importing cost determination module providing the quote
processor with the import cost.

Summary of Invention Paragraph:
[0009] In accordance with another aspect of the present invention there is provided
a method for providing a cost in a second currency of a product being imported into
a destination country, the product being offered for sale by an electronic commerce
system operating in a first currency, the method comprising: receiving a request
for the cost of the product in the second currency; obtaining information about the
product from the electronic commerce system; determining an import cost for the
product to be imported into the destination country based on information about the
product obtained from the electronic commerce system; establishing a total cost for
the product in the second currency; and providing the cost of the product in the
second currency.

Summary of Invention Paragraph:
[0010] In accordance with a further aspect of the present invention there is
provided a computer readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable
instructions for providing a cost in a second currency of a product being imported
into a destination country, the product being offered for sale by an electronic
commerce system operating in a first currency, the computer-executable instructions
performing the steps comprising: receiving a request for the cost of the product in
the second currency; obtaining information about the product from the electronic
commerce system; determining an import cost for the product to be imported into the
destination country based on information about the product obtained from the
electronic commerce system; establishing a total cost for the product in the second
currency; and providing the cost of the product in the second currency.

Brief Description of Drawings Paragraph:
[0011] FIG. 1A is a diagram of an electronic commerce system incorporating an
international shopping system according to the present invention;

Brief Description of Drawings Paragraph:

[0012] FIG. 1B is a diagram of an <u>electronic</u> commerce system incorporating an international shopping system according to the present invention;

Brief Description of Drawings Paragraph:
[0013] FIG. 1C is a diagram of an <u>electronic</u> commerce system incorporating an international shopping system according to the present invention;

Brief Description of Drawings Paragraph:
[0014] FIG. 2 is an architectural diagram of an <u>electronic</u> commerce system incorporating an international shopping system according to the present invention;

Brief Description of Drawings Paragraph:
[0015] FIG. 3 is a flow diagram for the <u>electronic</u> commerce system of FIG. 2;

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0020] In general, FIGS. 1A to 1C show various <u>electronic</u> commerce system 10 configurations incorporating an international shopping system 12 according to the present invention. FIGS. 1A to 1C show a merchant <u>electronic</u> commerce system 18, 22 containing a shopping basket 16, 24, 26 through which a customer interacting with the merchant system 18, 22 via a customer computer 20 can purchase products offered by the merchant system 18, 22. The products sold via the merchants 18, 22 may be any product, service or manufactured good. Individual merchant systems 18, 22 have separate <u>electronic</u> commerce systems connected over a network 30, such as the Internet, through which a customer computer 20, via a network interface 28 (e.g. a web browser such as Netscape Navigator.RTM. or Microsoft Internet Explorer.RTM.), can purchase products offered by each merchant system 18, 22. To offer the customer through the customer computer 20 the opportunity to receive a total product cost in a second currency other than the operating currency of the merchant system 18, 22, the basket 16, 24, 26 is in communication with a request sorter 14 and the international shopping system 12.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0026] FIG. 2 shows an architecture diagram of an <u>electronic</u> commerce system 10 incorporating the international shopping system 12 according to the present invention. The international shopping system includes a web <u>automation</u> system 104, a flow controller 102, a presentation system 100, a duty estimation system 110, and an international processing system 120.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0027] When customers shop with <u>online</u> merchants, they interact with the merchant's system 18 by traversing various product categories while inquiring about the underlying products and services. When an item of interest is found this item is added to the shopping basket of the customer. From the merchant's system 18 shopping basket, the customer initiates an international checkout process. This checkout may be handled by the international shopping system 12 of the present invention. The international shopping system 12 may interact with the merchant's system 18 using the customer's original session. Various actions may be performed on the merchant's site by the international shopping system 12 via the web <u>automation</u> system 104, the data collected and fed back into the presentation system 100 for display to the customer computer 20.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0028] The web <u>automation</u> system 104 retrieves necessary product information for determining a price quote directly from the merchant's system 18. This can be done with minimal integration effort by the merchant through the use of a data collection module 50 that searches the merchant's system 18 for specific product attributes that are then stored in the product database 32. The process of obtaining product information may occur in a batch process by taking a catalog of all products offered for sale by the merchant and storing this information in the product database 32. This process may be performed via scraping the merchant system

18. Alternatively, this process may occur in real-time as it is needed to fulfill a request. That is, specific product information (e.g. price information) may be collected from the merchant's system 18 as a request for a price quote or international purchase is received. The product information collected in real-time may be dynamic data such as the product price information and static data (e.g. product description and classification) may be obtained in a batch process and stored in the product database 32. After receiving such a request, the product information collected in real-time may be used to obtain corresponding static product information stored in the product database 32. The data collection module 50 may include third party services such as Orsus iGlue/Web.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0034] The presentation system 100 provides a display of the international shopping and checkout process to the customer computer 20. The presentation system 100 and the web automation system 104 act as input/output interfaces, repectively, between the customer computer 20, the international shopping system 12 and the merchant system 18, receiving and sending information between these systems.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0035] The international processing system 120 provides the services and logic for international quote and order preparation. In order to provide a landed cost price, a product attributes module 118 in the international processing system 120 system identifies individual line items that make up an international order. The product attributes module 118 extracts relevant product information from shopping basket information provided via the flow controller 102 from the web automation system 104.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0037] An order services module 122 places an order received from the customer computer 20 for products via the web automation system 104 with the merchant system 18. The international processing system 120 handles order payment, status and coordinates the delivery of the order. The order services module 122 analyzes customer and product information to determine if there is sufficient information to place a purchase order directly with the electronic commerce system 18 of the merchant.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0038] The order services module 122 can place an order through the merchant's electronic commerce system 18 in a variety of ways. The order services module 122 can simulate the actions the customer computer 20 would take to purchase a product directly from the merchant 18 via the web automation system 104. This might include actions such as automatically filling out forms and navigating through subsequent information requests and displays. Alternatively, the order services module 122 could purchase a product by interfacing directly with the merchant 18 providing a file containing purchase information such as products to be purchased, shipping information and payment information. This file includes such information as line number, item description, quantity, price, relevant shipping information (e.g. address, etc.) and payment information (e.g. credit card number and expiry date).

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0041] FIG. 3 shows a flow diagram 80 for the electronic commerce system 10 of FIG. 2. The customer browses products on the merchant system 18 in step 202. In an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, during this step interaction with the merchant system 18 may be via HTTP(S) requests, in which case, the merchant system 18 may set HTTP(S) cookies on a customer computer 20, in order to keep track of the state of the shopping process for this particular customer computer 20. During the browsing process (step 202), the customer may add product items to a shopping basket on the merchant system 18. If the interactions between the customer computer 20 and the merchant system 18 is via HTTP(S) then HTTP(S) cookies may be set on the customer computer 20.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0059] The quote manager 314 receives the product value in local currency, duty charges, shipping charges and tax amounts and combines these to determine a total product cost in a customer's local currency. The total product cost is forwarded to a customer computer 20 for review via a quote sender 318. The request receiver 300 via the flow controller 102 and the presentation system 100 and the quote sender 318 act as input/output interfaces between the international shopping system 12 and the customer computer 20, receiving and sending information between the two. The total product cost may be received by a customer computer 20 through notification via the basket 16, 24, 26, or by some other electronic means such as electronic mail, or a customized Internet website listing details of the total product cost. The total product cost may be viewed by the customer through the merchant's system 18 or the international shopping system 12 may communicate directly with the customer computer 20 to display the total product cost.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0064] The size rater 114 determines an approximate size of the product for shipping. This may include an estimate of both the size and the weight of the product. The information from the size rater 114 may be used by the quote processing module 124 to determine shipping insurance for the product as well as the likelihood that the product will be shipping in a single package, or in the same package as other products purchased from the same merchant system.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0076] In summary, the present invention provides a system and method for determining a total cost of a foreign originating product in a customer's local currency. The present invention allows a customer to shop via electronic methods regardless of a merchant's location country and receive the total final cost of the product in the customer's local currency. Currency exchange, duties and tariffs, taxes and shipping are included in the given total cost of the product. A duty estimation system of the present invention estimates duty charges prior to a product crossing an international border.

CLAIMS:

1. An international shopping system in communication with an electronic commerce system operating in a first currency and offering a product for purchase, the international shopping system providing a cost in a second currency for the product to be imported into a destination country, the international shopping system comprising: an input/output interface for receiving a request for the cost of the product in the second currency and providing the cost of the product in the second currency in response to the request; a commerce system interface to the electronic commerce system for obtaining information about the product in response to the request; a product cost calculation system comprising: a quote processor for establishing the cost in the second currency for the product to be imported; and an importing cost determination module in communication with the quote processor for determining an import cost for the product to be imported into the destination country based on information about the product obtained from the electronic commerce system, the importing cost determination module providing the quote processor with the import cost.

2. The international shopping system according to claim 1 wherein the commerce system interface includes: a product data module for obtaining product data from the electronic commerce system; a product data address module for obtaining a location address for the product data on the electronic commerce system.

3. The international shopping system according to claim 2 wherein the product information on the electronic commerce system is in the form of a web page and wherein the product data module includes a markup code module for obtaining a

markup code file containing the product data from the _electronic_ commerce system; and wherein the product data address module includes a Universal Resource Location (URL) module for obtaining a URL identifying the location of the product data on the _electronic_ commerce system

4. The international shopping system according to claim 1 further including a commerce system database containing information for communicating with and purchasing products from the _electronic_ commerce system.

5. The international shopping system according to claim 1 further including: a product database containing information about a plurality of products, the product offered for purchase by the _electronic_ commerce system being one of the plurality of products; wherein the product information obtained by the commerce system interface is stored in the product database.

7. The international shopping system according to claim 1 further including: an information sufficiency verifying module for analyzing the information from the _electronic_ commerce system about the product to determine if there is sufficient information to process the request and extracting product data relevant to the request for the product cost calculation system.

10. The international shopping system according to claim 9 wherein the duty estimation module comprises: a product categorizer for determining a product category for the product being imported based on product information from the _electronic_ commerce system; a duty estimator for estimating the duty rate for the product based on the product category; a duty charge processor for calculating an estimated duty charge based on the estimated duty rate and a value of the product.

11. The international shopping system according to claim 1 wherein the quote processor comprises: an exchange calculator for determining a value for the product in the second currency based on the product data from the _electronic commerce_ system; a quote manager for coordinating establishing the cost in the second currency for the product to be imported, the quote manager receiving information from the duty estimation module, the tax calculator, the _shipping_ calculator and the exchange calculator.

12. The international shopping system according to claim 1 wherein the product cost calculation system further includes: a purchasing module for purchasing the product from the _electronic_ commerce system.

13. A method for providing a cost in a second currency of a product being imported into a destination country, the product being offered for sale by an _electronic_ commerce system operating in a first currency, the method comprising: receiving a request for the cost of the product in the second currency; obtaining information about the product from the _electronic_ commerce system; determining an import cost for the product to be imported into the destination country based on information about the product obtained from the _electronic_ commerce system; establishing a total cost for the product in the second currency; and providing the cost of the product in the second currency.

14. The method according to claim 13 wherein the step of obtaining information about the product includes: obtaining product data from the _electronic_ commerce system; and obtaining a location address for the product data on the _electronic_ commerce system.

15. The method according to claim 14 wherein the step of obtaining product data includes obtaining a markup code file containing product data from the _electronic_ commerce system; and wherein the step of obtaining a location address for the product data includes obtaining a Universal Resource Locator (URL) identifying the location of the product data on the _electronic_ commerce system.

16. The method according to claim 13 further including: storing information about the product obtained from the <u>electronic</u> commerce system in a database.

20. The method according to claim 13 wherein the step of establishing a total cost includes: determining a value for the product in the second currency based on the product data from the <u>electronic commerce</u> system; coordinating establishing the cost in the second currency for the product to be imported based on the duty charge, the tax cost and the <u>shipping</u> cost.

21. The method according to claim 13 further including: purchasing the product from the <u>electronic</u> commerce system.

22. A computer readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions for providing a cost in a second currency of a product being imported into a destination country, the product being offered for sale by an <u>electronic</u> commerce system operating in a first currency, the computer-executable instructions performing the steps comprising: receiving a request for the cost of the product in the second currency; obtaining information about the product from the <u>electronic</u> commerce system; determining an import cost for the product to be imported into the destination country based on information about the product obtained from the <u>electronic</u> commerce system; establishing a total cost for the product in the second currency; and providing the cost of the product in the second currency.

23. The computer-readable medium according to claim 22 wherein the step of obtaining information about the product includes: obtaining product data from the <u>electronic</u> commerce system; and obtaining a location address for the product data on the <u>electronic</u> commerce system.

24. The computer-readable medium according to claim 23 wherein the step of obtaining product data includes obtaining a markup code file containing product data from the <u>electronic</u> commerce system; and wherein the step of obtaining a location address for the product data includes obtaining a Universal Resource Locator (URL) identifying the location of the product data on the <u>electronic</u> commerce system.

25. The computer-readable medium according to claim 22 further including: storing information about the product obtained from the <u>electronic</u> commerce system in a database.

29. The method according to claim 22 wherein the step of establishing a total cost includes: determining a value for the product in the second currency based on the product data from the <u>electronic commerce</u> system; coordinating establishing the cost in the second currency for the product to be imported based on the duty charge, the tax cost and the <u>shipping</u> cost.

30. The method according to claim 22 further including: purchasing the product from the <u>electronic</u> commerce system.

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DOCUMENT-IDENTIFIER: US 20020082880 A1
TITLE: Computerized system for transporting cargo

Pre-Grant Publication (PGPub) Document Number:
20020082880

Summary of Invention Paragraph:
[0005] This invention includes a computerized system for transporting cargo with marine, air, and land carriers. The computerized system receives inputs from a user such as port of loading, port of discharge, and type of cargo. The system determines and displays carriers that provide service for the desired route and cargo. The system also provides information such as prices and customs requirements and enables a user to book the transportation of cargo. The system also creates a record of the desired service so that a user or an agent can use the information to finalize a transaction at a later time.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0031] A system according to this invention for electronically selecting a cargo carrier and booking transportation of cargo is described below. A user 40 can access the web site of the host computing system 20 via the internet 30. Software contained in the CPU 22 can receive inputs from a user 40 and transmit responses to the user 40.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0039] The host computer system 20 can also provide a quote, book cargo, and insurance, customs, and bill of lading (B/L) information. The host computer system 20 can also provide the client 40 with information regarding agents based on inputs received from the client 40. Input collected by the host computer system 20 can be forwarded to an agent for use in assisting the client 40.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0040] The host computer system 20 can be set up with a user id and password system 122 as illustrated in the example display page 120 of FIG. 10. An inquiry number 124 and an electronic booking confirmation 126 can be created by the host computer system 20. A user 40 can enter this information at page 120 to access the host computer system 20. Port of loading customs information 127 and port of loading insurance information 128 can be provided to the user 40.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0046] The host computer system 20 can also assist the user 40 with payment options 182 as illustrated in example display page 180 shown in FIG. 16. Other information such as agent information 184 can be transmitted to the user 40. The host computer system 20 can generate an electronic booking confirmation (EBC) 186. The EBC 186 can be used to track a shipment and determine other factors related to a shipment, such as bill of lading instructions.

CLAIMS:

2. The computerized system specified in claim 1 wherein the data of a cargo carrier is <u>electronically</u> delivered to the host computer system.

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